

16

A

S E R M O N

694.4.18.
16

Preached before the Honourable

HOUSE of COMMONS,

A T

St. Margaret's Westminster,

U P O N

Wednesday the 30th of January, 1760;

B E I N G

The Day appointed to be observed as the Day
of the MARTYRDOM of King CHARLES I.

By CHARLES BURDETT, M.A.

Rector of Guildford, in Surrey,

And Chaplain to the Honourable the HOUSE of COMMONS.

L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN KNAPTON, in Ludgate-Street.
MDCCLX.

Jovis, 31 Die Januarii, 1760.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Mr. *Burdett*, Chaplain to this House, for the Sermon by him preached Yesterday before this House, at St. *Margaret's Westminster*, and that he be desired to print the same; and that Mr. *Staunton*, and Mr. *Olmus*, do acquaint him therewith.

J. DYSON, *Cl. Dom. Com.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
Hon. HOUSE of COMMONS,

A T
St. Margaret's Westminster,

U P O N
Wednesday the 30th of January, 1760.

I C O R. X. II.

*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples,
and are written for our admonition.*

THE Apostle having mentioned, in the beginning of this Chapter, the manifold Provocations of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, and the exemplary Punishments inflicted, on account of them, points out, in the words of my Text, the proper

B per

per Use and Application of what he had said, and the Expedience of recording and perpetuating the Memory of these, and the like providential Dispensations, for the Benefit and Admonition of future Ages. A serious Remembrance of the Miscarriages of our Forefathers will, at all times, be of signal Use to their Posterity. Past Evils will hereby serve as so many Land-marks or Lights, set up to warn us to shun the Rocks, which our Fathers split upon, and carefully to avoid whatever has a Tendency to introduce afresh the like Calamities. Nor can there be a more proper, or more effectual Method to keep up this Remembrance, than the Appointment of stated Times for the publick and solemn Commemoration of them: *That the Generations to come might know them, even the Children which shall be born, who shall arise and declare them to their Children, that they might not be, as their Fathers, a stubborn and rebellious Generation, a Generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God* *.

As this sufficiently justifies the Wisdom and Propriety of ordaining this annual Solemnity; so is it a tacit Reflection upon the Behaviour of all those, who either totally and contemptuously disregard the Observation of it, or by an Excess of *Warmth and Violence* unhappily defeat the good Design of it. For so long as it has the Sanction of supreme Authority, there is

* Psalm lxxviii. 6. 8.

undoubtedly a Respect, which common Decency requires, to be paid to it; and since it was evidently appointed for many excellent Purposes, which may still be served by it, it is equally certain, that whatever ill Use may be made of it by *others*, it will be entirely our own fault, if we fail to make a right Use of it *ourselves*, or to profit by it accordingly.

If we consider it merely as a *Day of Fasting and Humiliation for Sin*, and duly reflect upon the Benefit and Comfort, that will redound to us from a serious and religious Performance of the Duties, more especially required of us on such solemn Occasions,---of what infinite Importance it is to the Welfare of a People to reconcile themselves to their offended God, and to be at Peace with that Almighty Being, on the Favour and Protection of whose good Providence all the Happiness they enjoy, or hope for, intirely depends; we cannot surely think our time misemployed, when we readily comply with every Call; and gladly embrace every Opportunity given us to a national Reformation. With how much greater Forwardness ought we to lay hold of *such Occasions*, as are not only in their general nature productive of this good Effect, but are peculiarly adapted, from their particular Circumstances, to the putting us in the right way both *to understand, and to follow after the things that belong to our peace* *.

* Luke xix. 42.

Proceed we then, in that Spirit of Sobriety and Moderation, which should accompany all our religious Exercises, to recollect some of those admirable Lessons of *Instruction* and *Admonition*, which may be drawn---from the Transaction of this Day---from the Steps, that led to it---and from the fatal Consequences, with which it was attended.

I. As to the *Fact itself*, it is not easy to think, or speak of it without Horror: It was a Crime, no less than that of wilful and deliberate Murder---a Crime most odious in the sight of God, who, from the first Commission of it, thought fit to mark it out, and guard against it, by the severest Denunciations of his Wrath and Vengeance. It was Murder, aggravated by almost every Circumstance, that could inflame the Guilt of it. It was the Murder of a truly virtuous and religious Prince, who in Violation of all Laws, divine and human, was tried and condemned by a pretended High Court of Justice, and whose innocent Blood was shed before his own Palace, in the face of the Sun, and amidst the Sighs and Tears of Thousands of his loyal Subjects, who, with Concernment and Confusion, beheld the shocking Sight, without power either to save, or to help.

Such was the dismal Tragedy of this Day---such the execrable Crime for which the Land hath so long mourned

St. Margaret's Westminster.

5

mourned, and yet mourneth. And *what have we to do*, as often as we remember it, but to lie down in shame, and cover us with our own Confusion?---What have *we to say*, but to cry out in the language of the royal Penitent, *Deliver us from Blood-guiltiness, O God of our Salvation, and our tongue shall proclaim aloud thy mercy* *.

Yet has even this Scene of Horror and Darknes its bright Side; to which if we turn our eyes, we shall find, that it will afford us matter of Comfort and Instruction. When we consider with what Fortitude and Magnanimity, with what Steadiness and unshaken Constancy this unhappy King bore a long Course of unparalleled Sufferings, and particularly with what Patience and Resignation, with what Meekness and truly christian Charity for his Murderers he submitted to the last Efforts of their Cruelty and Malice; how ought we to bless God for this illustrious Display of the Power and Efficacy of true Religion, to support and strengthen Us in the sharpest Conflicts, and to make us more than Conquerors under the severest Persecutions for Righteousness sake! What less, than the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the powerful Aid of God's assisting Grace, could have enabled him so cheerfully to exchange his corruptible for an incorruptible Crown, and in his last Moments to express hopes full of Immortality! And how powerfully must this re-

* Psalm li. 14. lix. 16.

commend

commend to us a Life of Innocence and Integrity, of Righteousness and true Holiness, of Piety and Devotion, of Humility and heavenly Mindedness---when we have so signal a Proof in his blessed Example, that the End of such a Life is Peace.

II. If we take a view of the *fatal Steps*, that led to this woful Catastrophe, we shall find that the original Source of all the Calamities and Troubles, that ensued, was Strife and Contention. A Strife, small in its beginning, but encreasing with amazing rapidity, and gathering so much Strength in its progress, that, at last, like a Torrent, it bore down all before it, and became too impetuous to be kept within any Bounds or Restraints, either of Reason or Religion. The unhappy Misunderstanding between the King and his Parliament was artfully and industriously fomented by factious and designing Men, who either hoped to find their account in the publick Distractions, or under specious and plausible Pretences were plotting the most mischievous and iniquitous Schemes. Thus the Breach became so far widened, as to stop up every Avenue to Peace and Reconciliation, till the Quarrel ended in open and avowed Rebellion, and the Success of that Rebellion in the Murder of their Sovereign, and the utter Destruction both of Church and State.

And now, how naturally does this dear-bought Experience of our Ancestors, that *every Kingdom divided against*

*against itself is brought to Desolation**, remind us of that excellent Aphorism and Advice of Solomon—*The Beginning of Strife is, as the letting out of water, therefore leave off Contention before it be meddled with †*, i. e. Cease from it in time, before others have thrust themselves, or been drawn into the Contest---before it spreads and diffuses its Malignity, imbittering men's Spirits against each other, and becoming the fruitful Parent of every Evil and Disorder, which civil Discord, armed with Power, and irritated and inflamed by mutual Provocation, is capable of committing.

But chiefly are we admonished from hence, how nearly it concerns men, when they first engage in Opposition to Authority, or create Divisions, with Reason or Necessity, to examine seriously by what Spirit they are acted, and what Advantages they propose, either to themselves, or the Publick, by such Behaviour. *From whence*, saith the Apostle, *come Wars and Fightings among you; come they not from hence, even from your Lusts ‡*? Avarice and Ambition, Envy and Emulation, Discontent and Resentment, Pride and Haughtiness of Spirit, are too often the latent Springs of that Diffention, which conceals itself under the Disguise of the Love of Truth, and a Zeal for the publick Good. It is indeed the Interest of men of bad Designs to keep their real Intentions, as much as possible, from Discovery or Suspicion. But how difficult soever it may be, on

* Luke xi. 17.

† Prov. xvii. 14.

‡ James iv. 1.

this

this account, to penetrate into the hearts of *others*, we cannot surely be ignorant of what passes within our *own* breast, or at a loss to know the real Motives of our own Conduct, if *in earnest* we desire to know them. And whoever suffers himself under the Influence of any sinful Lust, or Passion to endanger the publick Tranquillity, or throw his own private Interest, or Resentments into the scale against the publick Good, must remember, that he is acting a part, which may affect the Safety and Happiness of thousands besides himself, and that he is answerable both to God and Man for all the evil Consequences, that may attend it.

But I have already said enough, and, perhaps, more than will be thought necessary of the dangerous Nature, and sad Effects of intestine Divisions. It might naturally be expected, that I should rather congratulate the Publick upon that happy Unanimity, (the Reverse of the times we are lamenting) which so eminently distinguishes the present Period. Never did that Union and Harmony, which is so necessary to strengthen the Sinews of Government, and to give Vigour, Stability, and Dispatch, to the great Objects of national Deliberation, shew itself more conspicuously, or in an higher degree, than now appears, not only among the Members of this august Assembly, before whom I have the honour to stand, but in every Part of the whole Kingdom. An Harmony so complete and perfect, and withal of such singular Importance at this Juncture, that

that it may justly be ascribed to that all powerful Influence, *which boweth the hearts of a Nation, as the heart of one Man* *---An Union so intire and universal, that the very Names of Party seem to be lost and forgotten, and the only Contest, which at present remains among an happy and grateful People, is, who shall be first and warmest in his Expressions of Loyalty and Affection to the Best of Kings, of ardent Zeal for the Honour and Happiness of his Person and Government, and of inviolable Attachment to his illustrious House. Long may this animating and delightful Scene continue to signalize and adorn his Reign! Under the pleasing Hope and Prospect of which Continuance, let us go on to such other Reflections, of a different, but not less useful Nature, as the present Subject affords; and which may briefly be reduced to these that follow; namely, The infatuating and progressive Nature of Sin—The Danger and Infection from evil Communications—and the Necessity of Foresight and Caution against the Wiles of Deceivers.

It may, without any great degree of presumption, be hoped, that many, who set out in Opposition to the King's Measures, acted upon Principles strictly to be justified, and thought it their Duty, as Representatives of the People, and Guardians of their Rights and Liberties, to withstand, to the utmost, every unjust Invasion and Violation of them. And provided they had gone no

* 2 Sam. xix. 14.

further than the doing this in a legal and parliamentary Way—had the Contention ceased, as soon as a stop was put to the arbitrary Proceedings, so justly complained of, and all reasonable Security was given against the like Attempts for the future; they would have been so far from justly incurring *Censure*, that they would have deserved *well* of their Country, and their Names had been transmitted to Posterity with Honour. But though *Some* of these had the good fortune to retreat in time, and by their subsequent Behaviour atoned, in some measure, for the Mischiefs, to which they had innocently and unwarily contributed; yet with *Others* the Case was very different. They apprehended, that they had gone too far to recede with Safety, and therefore suffered themselves contentedly to be carried forward with the Stream, and to concur in such Measures, as, though in their Hearts they condemned, they had neither Spirit or Resolution to oppose, nor Power to prevent. Hence did they proceed adding Sin to Sin, one unjustifiable Step still requiring another, and *that* again a third to vindicate, and defend the former, till they came at last to commit, without remorse, Crimes, which at first they would have startled at the thoughts of. Even of those, who were most deeply concerned in the Guilt of this Day, who sat in Judgment over their lawful Sovereign, and impiously subscribed their Names to the Warrant for his Execution, it may reasonably be presumed, that they were far from intending to go the lengths,

lengths, which they did. Their sole Object, at first, was a Change of the Constitution in Church and State, in which if they could have succeeded by any other Means, it is possible, they might have refrained from that *Extremity* of Violence, which, at last, they had recourse to. But when they found, that their favourite Schemes were not to be effected, but by the Murder of their Sovereign, and the Extirpation of his Family, then it was, that they were determined to the impious Resolution of *Root and Branch*, and by the most desperate act of consummate Wickedness to remove *every Obstacle* to their Designs.

As from hence we are admonished not to trust too much to the Uprightness, and Sincerity of our present good Intentions, and how vain a thing it is to say, when we engage in wicked Courses, Hitherto I will go, and no farther; so ought it to be a sufficient Caution to us, how we suffer ourselves to be made Partakers of other Men's Sins, or to be imposed upon by the cunning Craftiness of those, who lie in wait to deceive: And how necessary it is, in order to preserve ourselves from the Contagion of ill Examples, to shun the Converse or Intimacy of men of bad, or suspicious Principles *either in Government or Religion*. Most apposite is the Advice of Solomon: *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King, and meddle not (or rather mix not) with them, that are given to change* *: avoid, as much as possible, all

* Prov. xxii. 21.

Friendship, Familiarity, or Connexion with such restless Spirits, as no Form of Government, no Plan of Administration can please long together---Who are perpetually searching for something to find fault with, and are never better pleased, than when they can meet with it---Who, upon every slight Occasion, are for trying new Experiments upon the Body Politick; *wantonly hazarding* or secretly undermining the Peace and Order of the Establishment, they live under.

From thus considering the *previous Steps* to this Day's foul Transaction, and the Instruction, which they afford us, permit me to proceed, in the

III. and last Place, *to the fatal Consequences* of it, and to suggest in few words what we may learn from *them*, and more especially from *the Shame and Disappointment*, which the wicked Perpetrators of it themselves, as well the poor deluded Nation felt upon the Changes brought about by it.

We have already seen with what restless Activity, and determined Resolution the Enemies of the Constitution laboured for the Subversion of it; nor need it be repeated with what sanctified Pretences their Attempts were carried on. God was pleased in his just Judgments upon a sinful Nation to suffer them to succeed in their wicked Designs; and great and glorious things, no doubt, were expected from the *Work of the Lord,*

Lord, (as it was impiously called) thus prospering in their hands. But did the Event answer their Expectations? or had they reason to rejoice long in their Success? What was in the Conclusion the *Fruit* of those Doings, whereof they had so much cause to be ashamed? *They sowed the wind, and reaped the whirlwind* *. Instead of *pure Religion*, and a *thorough Reformation*, such a Deluge of Wickedness overspread the Land, as scarce left the *Appearance* of Religion among a Christian People; or an Appearance so hideous and deformed, as could not but render it hateful and ridiculous in the sight of all that beheld it. How miserable and distracted was the Condition of it; whilst the Church, *that* Church, which had so long been the Bulwark of the Protestant Religion, lay prostrate at the feet of her Enemies, under the numberless Sects, which rose up in her Place! How was the Purity of her Doctrine corrupted, her Peace disturbed, her Patrimony devoured, her holy Places laid waste, her Ministers persecuted! and with what implacable Rage and Malice did the two principal contending Parties, in their Contest for Dominion, pursue each other, till they had well nigh eradicated all Peace, and Order, and true Piety out of the Kingdom. Nor fared it better with the State upon the Down-fall of that ancient form of Kingly Government, under which it had for so many ages flourished. How miserably disappointed, how grievously imposed upon was the People, when after

* Hosea viii. 7.

a variety of Tossings, and Changings, from one Government to another, in which contrary Oaths, Protestations, and Engagements had successively been obtruded upon them, they found themselves at last under the Tyranny of an insolent Usurper, who governed more absolutely by his own Will and Pleasure, (equally trampling, in the most bare-faced manner, upon the Authority of the Law, the Power and Privileges of Parliament, and the Rights and Liberties of the People) than the most arbitrary Prince, that ever sat upon the *English* Throne. Ought not this to be a perpetual Warning to Us, and our Posterity, how dangerous a thing it is to unsettle Foundations! What a Discouragement must it give to every thing, that may break in upon the Peace and Order of a well regulated Establishment! What a convincing Proof does it afford us, that Religion and Loyalty go hand in hand, and mutually adorn and support each other; and lastly, that the Interests of the Church and State are so closely connected and interwoven with each other. that they must stand, or fall together; and that the Friends of Either will always appear to be the truest Friends to Both.

To conclude with what is the immediate End of our assembling upon this solemn Occasion, and which ought, first and last, to be uppermost in our thoughts.

We are indeed met together in a dutiful Compliance with the Law of our Country, and a Conformity to that
most

most excellent Office, appointed for the Day, to acknowledge and bewail that Load of national Guilt, which brought down the heavy Judgments of God upon our Fathers, and in particular to express our unfeigned Sorrow and Detestation of that execrable Crime, which has fixed an indelible Stain of Reproach and Infamy upon this Church and State; to deprecate the Vengeance due to it, and humbly to beseech Almighty God, that the innocent Blood, as on this Day shed, may never be required of Us, or our Posterity.

But, after all, it must be acknowledged, that it is in *our own Transgressions*, that we are principally concerned. If it was the crying Sins of the Nation, which brought down upon that Generation the sad Effects of God's Displeasure, we have reason to be assured, that the same Causes will always be productive of the same Effects; however for a Season God may respite the Execution of that Sentence, which is already passed against every evil Work. Under this Conviction let us deal faithfully and impartially with ourselves, and seriously reflect, whether that Luxury and Effeminacy, that Riot and Profuseness, that Carelessness and Indifference in Religion, that profane Contempt of God's Word and Ordinances, that Corruptness of Manners and evil Heart of Unbelief, which is so prevalent among us, may not equally provoke Almighty God to pour down his Wrath upon Us, as he did upon Them.

It hath hitherto pleased him to try the gentler Methods of Mercy and Forbearance, nay, even to distinguish us with Acts of Favour and Loving-kindness. Not to insist upon our Happiness in *other* respects; in the free Exercise of our holy Religion, in the Security and Protection of our civil Rights under a legal Government; in the plentiful Increase, with which he so lately and so seasonably refreshed the Earth, and in his Goodness prepared for the Poor; in the watchful Providence, with which he guarded our Coasts against the Invasion of our Enemies—Let us only reflect, *how long* we have been happy under the Reign of a just, and mild, and gracious King, whose Glory and Delight it is to be the Father of his People, and whose unwearied Endeavours for their Happiness and Prosperity, and magnanimous Zeal for the Recovery and Protection of their *just Rights* against the Encroachments and Usurpations of a perfidious Enemy, have endeared him to the *Affection* of the present, and will entitle him to the *Admiration* of future times.

Nor hath God been gracious to us in *this* respect only, in granting the King *a long Life*, but also in vouchsafing him the Request of his Lips, and making him to see his Desire upon his Enemies. He hath blessed his Counsels with Unanimity, and his Arms with Success beyond the Example of *former* ages, and hath, in the Language of the Prophet, *made us a Name*
and

*and a Praise among all the people of the earth *. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes : but still, let us remember, that it is more than we have deserved. Let not therefore the Splendor of any thing that is Great, nor the Conceit of any thing that is Good in us, withdraw our eyes from looking upon ourselves as sinful Dust and Ashes, or make us forget, that, so long as we do wickedly, we are continually liable to that Indignation, which yet he suffereth not to arise, and that, whenever he shall think fit to enter into Judgment with us, we are sure to be condemned, and may justly be consumed.*

Though he waiteth to be gracious in hopes of our Amendment, yet, if we frustrate, or abuse this merciful Purpose of his Forbearance and Long-suffering, he will, after all the Kindness he hath shewn us, cast us off in his Displeasure : We shall be no longer his People, nor He *our* God. What remains then, but that we be exhorted to search out every man the Plague of his own Heart, and the Idol he hath set up in it, and put away from him the Abomination of *his* evil Doings ? Let us all in our several Stations do our utmost to promote that Righteousness, which alone exalteth a Nation ; and, by departing from our Iniquities, avert the Destruction, which, sooner or later, is sure to overtake a disobedient and incorrigible People. Let those in particular, who by the Influence of their Ex-

* Zeph. iii. 20.

ample, or the Exercise of their Authority, are best qualified to do it, within their respective Spheres be diligent to exert *Both*, to the utmost of their Power, in the Discouragement and Punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and in the Maintenance of God's true Religion and Virtue. In a Word, let all, who have a real Concern for the Good of their Country, be careful to express it, by the best and surest Testimony we can give of it, a Zeal for God's Glory, by walking in his Fear ourselves, and by promoting, as far as in us lies, the Practice of Peace and Righteousness among others.

F I N I S.

